

Book Reviews

*Science and Scientists**Essays by Biochemists, Biologists and Chemists*

Edited by M. Kageyama, K. Nakamura, T. Oshima and T. Uchida

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xvi + 454 pages. \$ 59.50

This volume of short essays by scientists from different parts of the world is impossible to review in the conventional manner. The essays were collected as a tribute to Professor F. Egami, the Japanese biochemist who has initiated research in many different fields of biochemistry. Some of the contributions are largely biographical, such as the essay by Chargaff who, in his inimitable way, deplores the increasing association of science with commerce and the industrial establishment. His distinction between the 'Platonians' and the 'Cartesians' is interesting and challenging. A contribution by Braunstein combines an objective history of the discovery of transamination with a personal declaration of his philosophy. John Edsall gives a brief account of his scientific career, his service to the biochemical community as the chief editor of the *Journal of Biological Chemistry*, and his interest in the ethical problems presented by the application of science to contemporary society. C.L. Tsou tells us how his scientific career, which included a period of study under David Keilin at Cambridge, was greatly affected by sudden political changes in China. He carried out his important work under conditions which are not easy to appreciate by a scientist living in the western world. There are many other essays which have a strong biographical component and which are of interest to anybody studying the development of modern biochemistry.

On the other side, there is a stimulating survey of the importance of amino acids in brain function by J.H. Quastel, who has been continuously active as a scientist for about 60 years. This, and the following contribution on γ -aminobutyric acid by E. Roberts, shows the remarkable and unusual position of the brain, in which chemical specialization occurs in specific areas. This of course parallels the high degree of physiological specialization found in this organ. Lord Todd discusses the reasons why phosphorus occurs in so many different types of biological compounds; and A. Dorfman gives a brief and informative survey of the biosynthesis of proteoglycans.

One could go on picking out certain essays, but this would be a somewhat invidious task. Most of the articles are well-written, some are challenging, and several have given new information to the reviewer. Reading this volume was a pleasant task, and this book can therefore be recommended to anybody who has a particular interest in the development of modern biochemistry.

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